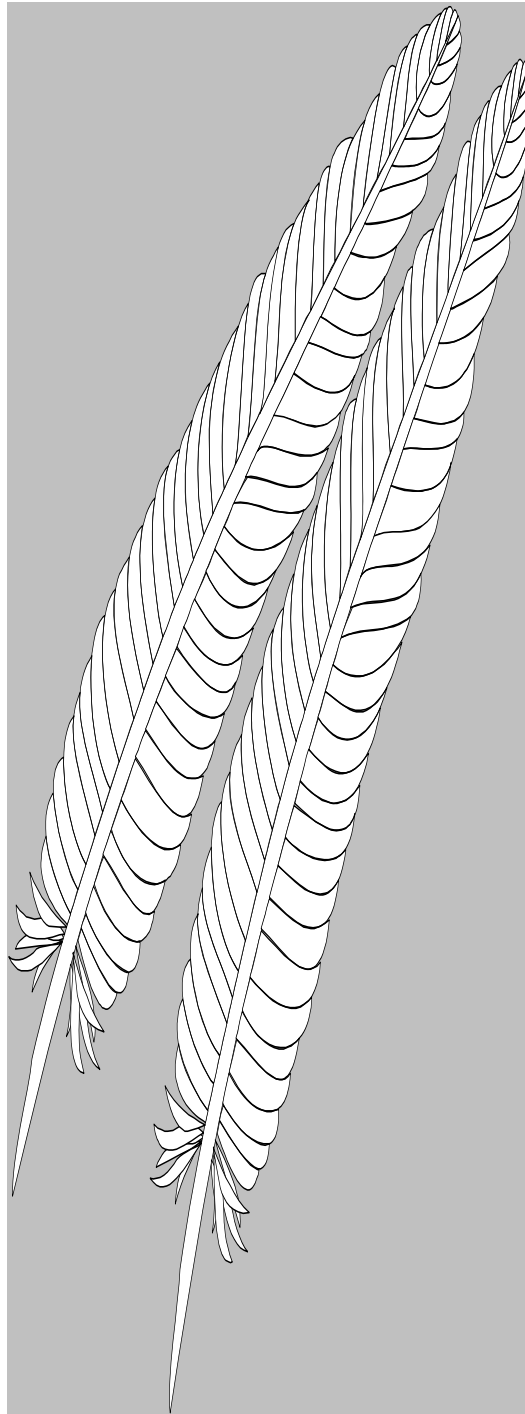


## Spiritual Healing

*We enter life anew  
The healing is now  
a part of us  
We are responsible  
for our actions.*

*Within all actions  
A relationship exists*

A Ho  
Mitakuye Oyasin



## VA Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center & Clinics Native American Sweat Lodge

A Link to The Past  
An Understanding That  
We Are All Related  
“Mitakuye Oyasin” (Lakota)



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## The Sweat Lodge

The Sweat Lodge Ceremony is central to several Native American cultures and their spiritual life and may be one of the most recognized of all Native American Ceremonies. In former times Native American's participated in Sweat Lodge Ceremonies before any great undertaking, to acquire spiritual, mental and physical healing, to connect with the spirit world and receive guidance, to prepare for rites of passage and vision quests, and in connection with other ceremonies. The White City Southern Oregon Rehab Center and Clinic Sweat Lodge allow veterans to direct attitudes, morals, and values into a strong positive force. By using Spiritual Leaders and the Sweat Lodge, the participant can be involved in self-discovery and spiritual awakening. The Lodge itself is a single room shelter "wickiup" usually made up of willow saplings bent over and tied together with a natural cord material creating a low domed framework approximately 4-5 feet high at the center. The lodge in former times was covered with the hides of buffalo, bear or moose. In this day, the animal skins have been replaced with blankets, heavy gauge canvas sheets and tarps to retain the heat and the steam. Depending on tribal locations the structure and materials used for construction may vary. The floor of the lodge is earthen but may have a covering for comfort and cleanliness. The door of the lodge is generally built very low, which requires participants to enter crouched or even on their knees. Inside the lodge is a small shallow pit (in the center or left side) whereby heated stones "ancient ones or grandfathers" are placed as they are brought into the lodge for the ceremony. Dirt from this center is used to form a small altar mound in front of the lodge entrance. Traditionally on this altar are a Buffalo or other skull and participants can place special things there to help them in the sweat. The altar is on an east-west axis between the sacred fire pit at the east end where the sun rises and gives birth to each day and the lodge at the west end of the line. This axis is an avenue of spiritual power to be respected and beyond which none may pass except the lodge or fire keepers.

The fire is special in many respects. Fire: a piece of the sun, a relationship of wood "Cha" and energy, a source of heat, light and strength. Heating the stones in the sacred fire awakens, The Stone People spirits, otherwise known as "Ancient Ones, Grandfathers". These stones are usually volcanic and represent our oldest living relatives. As the stones are heating the Chanunpa (This terminology is from the Lakota Peoples, the "Sacred Pipe" is known by many names amongst the Tribes of the Nation) carriers enter the lodge a song is heard from the lodge as the carriers prepare the Chanunpa for the ceremony. When the Chanupa's are ready and the stones are hot the Sweat Lodge Leader will request that they are brought into the lodge where the participants have gathered. As the stones are placed sage and prayers are offered for each stone. Water is brought into the lodge and the entrance is closed and sealed by the Sweat Lodge Leader. As the Sweat Lodge Leader dips and pours water onto the hot stones he introduces himself, welcomes and orients the new participants and requests for Spirit calling songs to be sung.

### THE CEREMONY BEGINS

#### First Door "Spirit Calling"

Through song we call on and ask for the spirits to join us. At the end of the spirit calling song we introduce our selves and offer and share our prayers and concerns. With each pour the temperature and steam rise and in the eyes of the spirits, as we set aside our differences, we are all seen as the same, as one; we become family a family humbled and honored to sit with the Creator in the womb of Mother Earth "The Sweat Lodge".

More songs are sung, the temperature increases prayers are heard and the healing begins.

#### Second Door "Prayer"

Again we enter the lodge the leader asks for more stones and as water is poured speaks to us about the power of prayer. Prayer, with meaning, from the heart, is our connection and our bond. Songs are sung, water is added to the stones and the cleansing steam helps us to lose our selves as we pray. Again we immerse ourselves in the heat and as we struggle to survive we focus on our prayers and begin to gain a

freedom from the restrictions of the physical self. Through this freedom we connect and become strong, the healing continues.

#### Third Door "Doctoring"

This time upon entering the lodge we become engaged in a pause. The leader does not request stones but rather the Chanunpa be brought into the lodge. With reverence we observe the handling, the fire brought to the bowl and the smoke released in the air from the carriers of the Sacred Pipe. This is the offering of the Chanunpa Wakan "The Sacred Pipe (Cha- wood, nunpa or nupa-stone wakan- sacred). The Chununpa is one of the most sacred gifts to the Native people. With quiet reverence the pipe is passed to all and whether one smokes or not their focus is on their prayer. Although not inhaled the same as cigarettes the smoke is brought in and released with concentration on your prayers and your request for help from the Creator, Mother Earth, and the Four Directions. The Chununpa circles through everyone and back to the carriers for the final smoke. Once complete the Chunupa's are carried out. The Lodge Leader requests more stones than usual and as he begins to pour the water he lets you know this round will be hot and this is your time to suffer for others and yourself. As Healing Songs are sung, we Focus and Trust in our Prayers and Commitment; we Suffer for Others and Allow the Spiritual Healing to Embrace Us

#### Fourth Door "Spirit Returning"

Again we return more stones are added but a few less this time. Our Leader lets us know that what we have heard and experienced stays with us here in the Lodge. We are offered time to discuss things we may have experienced or forgotten. Appreciations are offered water is pored (lightly) and a warming prepares us to emerge from the lodge reborn into a purity of body, mind and spirit. As we listen to Spirit Returning Songs we know this Lodge is not ending but as in life this Lodge is a part of a continuum and as we leave this Lodge we prepare ourselves for another Lodge.